

THE LESSONS OF THE PEEKSKILL RIOTS

What Happened and Why

JAMES RORTY AND WINIFRED RAUSHENBUSH

IN AUGUST, a year ago, the papers headlined a story that tightened the nerves of Jewish readers from coast to coast. And not only Jews were so affected—decent men and women of all faiths and races read the story with shock and apprehension.

What had happened, apparently, was that the pattern of hatred and rioting that had preceded Hitler's capture of power in Germany had been repeated for the first time on American soil—and not in the deep South, but in Peekskill, on the outskirts of the New York metropolitan area.

A protest parade of veterans had prevented a scheduled outdoor concert by Paul Robeson, the Negro singer, which was to have been held under the auspices of the Civil Rights Congress. Members of the hostile crowds that lined the roads had hurled hate-

filled insults at Jews and Negroes, and finally had physically attacked those who had come to attend the concert. In the course of the riot, automobiles were stoned and overturned; some of the concert-goers were injured; a fiery cross was burned on a nearby hillside. In the darkness and confusion of the fighting an anti-Robeson demonstrator, a veteran, was stabbed.

A week later, the headlines were even bigger and more frightening.

Robeson had returned to Peekskill, and had given a concert on an abandoned golf course; 15,000 people, most of whom had come from New York in automobiles and buses, attended. The audience was protected by 2,500 of Robeson's own guards as well as by a heavy mobilization of police. No violence had occurred during the concert. But, afterward, the cars and buses of the returning concert-goers had been stoned by hundreds of men, women, and teen-agers, many of whom had shouted anti-Semitic and anti-Negro expletives. More than a hundred and fifty persons were injured. The police, it was charged, had not only failed to stop this violence but had passively permitted it and had even fraternized with the rioters, one of whom was the son of Peekskill's police chief.

This time, surely, there could be no doubt. It had happened here. The ugly drama that had had its première in Germany in the early 30's had been re-enacted in America with a similar cast, to which had been added the unfortunate Negroes.

Peekskill was denounced from coast to coast and in the capitals of Europe, Asia, and South America as reactionary and fascist-minded, a delinquent among American cities. A street banner reading "Wake Up America—Peekskill Did," displayed in Peekskill before the second riot, was cited as evidence that Peekskill was ready to see itself as the nucleus of an anti-Semitic, anti-Negro, fascist movement. Four months after the event, a scathing indictment of the Peekskill community appeared in the form of a report en-

THE riots in the small New York city of Peekskill, a little more than a year ago, aroused deep public concern. Did they represent a recrudescence of the anti-minority hostility that enabled the Ku Klux Klan to write some of the more shameful pages in American history? Did they portend a fascist danger, with all its racist menace, in our country? It was to find out what the Peekskill events really signified that JAMES RORTY and WINIFRED RAUSHENBUSH undertook to write this article. Mr. Rorty is the author of many books on radio, advertising, food supply, and other matters, and has written widely on civil rights and other social problems in COMMENTARY and other magazines. Winifred Raushenbush, his wife, has specialized in the problems of American immigrant and minority groups; she was a member of the staff of the commission that investigated the Chicago race riots after the First World War, and is the author of the American Civil Liberties Union pamphlet "How to Prevent a Race Riot in Your Home Town." Space will be provided in future issues of COMMENTARY for further discussion, from points of view different from those of the writers, of the Peekskill affair, and of how best to deal with or forestall similar community situations.

titled "Violence in Peekskill," published by the American Civil Liberties Union. Five other organizations signed the foreword to this report, asserting that "we believe it to be a fair representation of documented fact." (However, three organizations—the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the National Urban League—declined to associate themselves with the report.)

The writers were asked to undertake an examination of the riots. The analysis here presented rests on a scrutiny of available published material, and on interviews with many of the people directly or indirectly involved, including police and other officials, leading citizens of the area, the local press and radio, real estate men, veterans, natives of Cortlandt, Verplanck, and Croton, summer residents, year-round Jewish and Negro residents.

Riots are notoriously difficult to report, with respect both to what happened and, especially, why it happened. Nothing short of an extended and heavily financed study by competent social scientists would be sufficient to establish the full, uncolored facts of the Peekskill riots and to place these facts in proper perspective. Obviously the writers are not in a position to render any such definitive appraisal. However, the attrition of time and the investigations of various public and private bodies have served in some degree to winnow fact from legend.

II

FOR three hundred years, Peekskill, the trading center of a lovely eastern New York State countryside, drowsed along without much public notice. Although it is situated now near the northern rim of the great New York metropolitan area, its basic economic character has not changed. A century or two ago the farmers and their wives bustled into town in high-wheeled buggies from Cold Spring, Mahopac, Carmel, and Croton, while today they and the summer residents arrive in cars. But Peekskill remains the trading and shopping center of an essentially rural area. Most of its citizens tend to be suspicious of anyone who deviates noticeably from the public norm, and they place a high value on conventional comportment in public places.

The essentially rural character of the Peekskill area is not likely to last much long-

er, however, for Peekskill is only forty miles from Times Square. It already has about 600 people who commute to New York and there are some 50,000 summer residents from New York City. A year ago, when the riots occurred, Peekskill was in a stage of transition and stress, still striving to adjust itself to the heavy influx of New Yorkers who come to pass the summer in its environs.

The city of Peekskill itself—it was a village up to ten years ago—is bounded by the Hudson River on the west, and on its other three sides by the little town of Cortlandt, which places it in an unnatural kind of economic and political strait jacket. If, to replace the present crazy-quilt of little rural townships, a considerable section of the Peekskill area were to be merged into one municipality, a much sounder development of the area might be possible. Such a municipality, for example, could conserve some of the abundant lake frontage of the area, now bought up almost entirely by summer residents, for the permanent use of the native population. In any case, at the present rate it seems likely that a few decades from now the little towns of the Peekskill area will have been swallowed up into New York City's Westchester County bedroom belt, one of the world's most moneyed and best-groomed suburbs.

Although there had always been a few Catholics and Jews in the Peekskill trading area, the population as a whole was Protestant up to a century ago, when Irish Catholics settled in Verplanck's Point, a sunny stretch of land extending into the Hudson River just south of Peekskill. Until a patient and forceful priest civilized them, so the Irish say, every other building in Verplanck was a saloon, and goats and chickens roamed the streets. Even the Italian Catholics who settled there later spoke, it is alleged, with a broad Irish brogue.

The first Catholic church in the Peekskill area was built in Verplanck in 1843. Early in the 1860's the Catholics of Peekskill decided to build a church too. There was strong opposition to this. The stones that were laid in the daytime were torn down at night. At this point, the Verplanck Catholics moved in with all-night guards, and the church went up. The Ku Klux Klan continued this tradition of anti-Catholicism in the rural counties of the Hudson Valley, and the apex of the Klan activity was reached between 1924 and

1928, when the minister of one of Peekskill's leading Protestant churches was a Klansman and many fiery crosses were burned. Al Smith's campaign aroused the anti-Catholics of the area to a fever pitch. In 1928, the Klan in a moment of sheer insanity decided to burn a cross in St. Mary's cemetery in Verplanck, which was still almost 100 per cent Irish and Catholic. That evening, the Verplanckers turned out their lights early by way of encouraging the Klansmen. Then they fell on the Klansmen and pummeled them out of town, injuring slightly one man, the Klan leader.

Recalling this twenty-year-old brawl, some younger veterans sloganeered during the first anti-Robeson demonstration about "cleaning out the Commies the way we cleaned out the Klan." No more unfortunate precedent could have been invoked. In the first place, the Verplanck Catholics had had the sense to let the Klan take the onus of lawless invasion and attack. In the second place, fighting the Klan and fighting Communism are two quite different propositions, the latter being much the more complex and difficult. Instead of "cleaning out the Commies," all that the veterans succeeded in doing was to furnish the Communists here and abroad with a first-class propagandistic springboard.

Since 1936 the Klan has not been heard of at all in the Peekskill area. The "16-foot-high Klan crosses," as an American Labor party handbill described them, that were burned on the night of the first riot, proved to be one small cross burned, not by the Klan, but as a prank by some teen-age boys. Today the Catholics constitute about one-third of the people of the city of Peekskill itself and are equally numerous in some of the surrounding towns. They are well regarded and the Catholic priests of the area are among its leading citizens. Actually, it took the Catholics almost a century to be accepted in this rural Protestant American community. This lag, and the long friction, had nothing to do with fascism, pre-fascism, or any such modern sophisticated ideologies. Rather, it was the ancient and familiar xenophobia—especially toward those of a different religion—of rural communities all over the world.

WHEREAS the Catholics had filtered into the area gradually for over a century, most of the Jews arrived quite suddenly, and

in what appeared to the natives to be overwhelming numbers, in the brief span of thirty years. Peekskill had had a small Jewish population for many decades. But it was not prepared for the Jewish summer migrations which began shortly after World War I and which, during the summer of 1949, attracted some 30,000 Jews to the Peekskill area. Since the city of Peekskill itself has only 18,000 inhabitants, so many strangers could not fail to be upsetting.

For a variety of reasons, however, there was much less resistance to the Jews than there had been to the Catholics. During the last twenty years there has been no noteworthy anti-Jewish incident in the city of Peekskill itself and only one minor incident in the surrounding area. Reports by some journalists of anti-Semitic violence prior to the riots are said by Peekskill Jews to have been pure invention.

This is not to say that there has been no friction between the newcomers and old residents. The friction arose, in part, from the city manners and informality of dress of some of the summer residents, in part from the fact that Jewish Communists were known to be at some of the predominantly Jewish summer colonies of the area. In addition, there was certainly some downright racial and religious prejudice of the kind that can be found in almost every small town in America. There was also resentment against Jews in rural townships outside the city of Peekskill, where the natives feared that they themselves might become a minority. In Shrub Oak, for instance, one-third of the year-round population is now Protestant, one-third Catholic, and one-third Jewish. School board elections in Shrub Oak and other towns reflect a continuous struggle for power among Catholics, Jews, and Protestants. The fact that most of the Jews in the area do not vote and do not run for public office somewhat dulls the conflict.

The history of Peekskill is probably not very different from that of other Hudson Valley towns with recent and heavy Jewish summer-resident populations. It is not a history of brotherly love and mutual understanding. It is also *not* a history of violence or of festering anti-Semitism.

Just as deficiency diseases are caused initially by what people do not eat, so racial and religious prejudices thrive largely because of

what communities do not do. If they had been used in time, the available resources of mutual respect and confidence among Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish groups in the Peekskill area were quite enough to have prevented the riots—or at least to have aborted their racist aspects. Because they were not used, the latent virus of anti-Semitism flared during the crisis—briefly but so violently that many Jews were convinced that they were witnessing an actual pogrom.

It wasn't, as later events proved. The active infection chiefly responsible for the breakdown of the Peekskill community was neither anti-Semitism nor fascism, native or imported. It was the Communist virus—and the resulting vigilante fever.

WHAT does make the Peekskill area different from most similar sections of the United States is the presence of Communists in large numbers. The Communists make up only a small percentage of the Jewish summer population. But their numbers are not insignificant, and they have managed in their usual disciplined and vociferous way to make their presence keenly felt. "We have had Communists on our doorsteps for thirty years," is the way the natives put it. The three main Communist concentrations are Camp Beacon on the north, around the town of Mohegan to the east, and around Croton on the south. Camp Beacon is known to the area as the scene of important party conferences, and accommodates 1,400 persons.

For the residents of Peekskill and its surrounding towns, the Communists were an especially alien group. The area is traditionally Republican. In the city of Peekskill itself, with its 18,000 inhabitants, there are believed to be only two or three Communists, while the American Labor party vote has almost never totaled over a hundred. There was no open conflict between the natives and the Communist summer residents prior to the first Robeson concert in 1946. It was Robeson's series of three concerts that provided a focus for the suspicion, dislike, and uneasiness of the native population.

III

NOT all Americans who have at some time heard Paul Robeson sing are aware that during the war he entered a new phase of his career. Having been a successful football

star, lawyer, actor, concert singer, movie actor, and radio performer, he decided in 1946 to dedicate his life to leading "his people" along the path marked out by the Communist party line.

As the residents of the Peekskill area saw it, the three Robeson concerts held there in 1946, 1947, 1948 could no more be considered mere musical events than a Communist rally in Madison Square Garden. They were primarily fund-raising affairs and Communist demonstrations. (Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt in one of her columns vigorously objected to Robeson's utilization of his concerts for political purposes.) Each year Robeson's supporters in the area were forced to look for a new location. In 1949, Robeson's sponsors, the Civil Rights Congress, had to hire a field in Cortlandt, neighboring on Peekskill. When local citizens explained to the owners that the Civil Rights Congress was on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations, they tried vainly to break their contract.

Every year that Robeson appeared, there were protest letters to the Peekskill *Evening Star*. In 1947, the Peekskill post of the American Legion asked citizens to "refrain from attending." As a counter to this request, an advertisement in the *Evening Star*, with twenty-eight signatures, including that of Albert E. Kahn, noted Croton Communist sympathizer, welcomed Robeson to Peekskill.

As a top-flight Communist spokesman, Robeson is quite open about his loyalty to the Soviet Union. During the summer of 1949, he was quoted widely in the American press as asserting that he would not fight for this country against Russia. "I love this Soviet people," said Robeson, "more than any other nation . . . it [is] unthinkable that the Negro people of America or elsewhere in the world could be drawn into war with the Soviet Union." Robeson's speeches were featured in the Peekskill *Evening Star*, which also headlined, as did the metropolitan press, such events as the Communist mass picketing of Judge Medina's court and the Mindszenty trial in Hungary.

All this served to heighten local anti-Communist feeling, so that when it was suddenly announced, only ten days before the event, that Robeson was to hold another "concert" in the area, there was an immediate buzz of protest.

Two local veterans were chiefly responsible for the idea of confronting Robeson's fourth propaganda meeting with a counter-demonstration. They were Herman Schwiter, who lives in the town of Cortlandt, within a mile or two of the scene of the two riots, and Vincent Boyle, a member of one of Verplanck's oldest Irish-Catholic families and commander of the William J. Boyle post of the American Legion (named after his brother, killed in World War II). Neither veteran resembles the "mobster," "fascist," and anti-Semitic caricatures who glare and froth in the pages of the *Daily Worker*.

Schwiter is a tall, gaunt ex-sailor in his fifties who served in the navy in both world wars. In World War I he was blown out of a mine-sweeper; in World War II, out of a submarine chaser. He is a native-born American of German descent, a Catholic, married to a Protestant. When he heard that Robeson had scheduled a fourth propaganda concert, Schwiter telephoned his friends: "If it's all right for the Commies to picket Medina's court and call him a rat, why isn't it all right for us to picket Robeson's phony concert?"

Boyle is now twenty-four. He is a pint-sized ex-gob, perhaps a little less cocky today than he was a year ago when fate caught him up in a moment of history he is still trying to understand. Of more than average intelligence, Boyle got some useful training in the navy and supplemented it by a year of study under the GI Bill of Rights. He has a good job as an electrician and was recently married. Earnest to the point of naivety, Boyle has neither the glibness nor the deviousness of the typical small-town politician, nor is there any evidence of anti-Semitism in his past record or his present attitudes. His brother was in the air force and was killed while flying the Hump. His father died when he heard the news. Both are buried in the Catholic cemetery just across the highway from Lakeland Acres where the first Robeson meeting was to be held.

It was Boyle who wrote the letter to the Peekskill *Evening Star* that is cited in the American Civil Liberties Union's report of the riots, along with an accompanying editorial, as constituting "a calculated act" leading to "a deliberate and premeditated invasion of Cortlandt, mainly by Peekskill men, for the purpose of committing a crime."

Boyle's letter read in part as follows:

"The present days seem to be crucial ones for the residents of this area with the present epidemic of polio. Now we are being plagued with another, namely, the appearance of Paul Robeson and his Communistic followers, due to appear here August 27th. It is an epidemic because they are coming here to induce others to join their ranks and it is unfortunate that some of the weaker minded are susceptible to their fallacious teachings unless something is done by the loyal Americans of this area.

"Quite a few years ago a similar organization, the Ku Klux Klan, appeared in Verplanck and received their just reward. Needless to say they have never returned. I am not intimating violence in this case, but I believe that we should give this matter serious consideration and strive to find a remedy that will cope with the situation the same way as Verplanck and with the same result that they will never reappear in this area.

"The irony of this meeting is that they intend to appear at Lakeland Acres Picnic Area. If you are familiar with this location you will find that it is located directly across the street from the Hillside and Assumption cemeteries. Yes, directly across the street from the resting place of those men who paid the supreme sacrifice in order to insure our democratic form of government. . . . If we tolerate organizations such as this we are apt to face a repetition of the past and in the near future. If we of this area have not forgotten the war, then let us cooperate with the American Legion and similar veteran organizations and vehemently oppose their appearance or appearances. Let us leave no doubt in their minds that they are unwelcome around here either now or in the future. . . ."

In the same issue, the leading editorial, after briefly reviewing Robeson's career, concluded:

". . . Every ticket purchased for the Peekskill concert will drop nickels and dimes into the till basket of an un-American political organization.

"If the Robeson concert this Saturday follows the pattern of its predecessors, it will consist of an unsavory mixture of song and political talk by one who has described Russia as his 'second motherland' and who has avowed 'the greatest contempt' for the democratic press.

"The time for tolerant silence that signifies

approval is running out. Peekskill wants no rallies that support iron curtains, concentration camps, blockades, and NKVD's, no matter how masterful the decor, nor how sweet the music."

The general line of both the letter and editorial was not dissimilar to many such in the New York press at the time of the Bund rally in Madison Square Garden in 1939—which occasioned a mass picketing demonstration. Their attitude to violence was ambiguous, Boyle's letter disavowing it, but not very convincingly in view of his reference to the Verplanck precedent. (A second editorial, which appeared the day of the riot, specifically warned against violence and urged potential troublemakers to stay away.) The Peekskill community was fed up with the annual Robeson meetings, wanted to be rid of them, and was uncertain as to what to do about it. In such a situation, the question of violence is solved on the spot, according to the contingencies of events. In the case of the Bund rally in New York a decade earlier, violence was avoided by a strong police mobilization and by the grace of urban geography: Madison Square Garden had many avenues of access and exit and it was easy for the Bundists to mix with the crowd, slip in, and then slip out into the crowd again. In Peekskill, geography and human irresponsibility combined to transform a contingent situation into a tragic one.

THE first Robeson riot was compounded of accidents and blunders, including a little over-smartness on the part of the veterans. Some of the veterans probably foresaw—and hoped—that the crowds attracted by their demonstration would block the roads and thereby delay or prevent the concert. This was, in fact, what occurred. But other, unforeseen, things occurred too.

The concert was scheduled for 8:15 P.M. Shortly before eight o'clock Ray La Polla, news editor of the local radio station WLNA, phoned the United Press: "The roads are jammed for miles; anything can happen."

What had already happened was that an estimated 2,000 ticket holders had tried to reach the concert grounds, of whom only about 200 had succeeded—not including Robeson. According to William L. Patterson, the singer was found sitting in his car a few hundred yards from the concert grounds and

was persuaded to take refuge in the home of a nearby sympathizer. By blocking the 20-foot black-top highway that provided the only means of access to the grounds by car, the parade had delayed, and in effect prevented, the concert.

It had also provided a release for the muddy brew of anti-Communism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Negroism that boiled out of the crowds, numbering an estimated 5,000, that lined the highway near the entrance to the grounds. The name-calling is said to have started with the appearance of a number of mixed black and white couples. "Kike" and "nigger-lover" were among the milder insults reported by eyewitnesses. Even the Jewish war veterans who participated in the veterans' parade were booed and insulted by anti-Semites among the bystanders (though they were also applauded by members of the crowd).

Neither the veterans as a whole nor their leaders had reckoned on the mob hysteria and hatred for which their demonstration provided a release. Many of them, in fact, were dismayed and shocked, including Vincent Boyle. After the veterans' parade ended (it was by this time too late for the concert to get organized), Boyle and his fiancée returned as spectators to the entrance of the picnic grounds in time to witness the next act of the drama.

In semi-darkness, a group of about thirty local men, including some veterans, had defied the Robeson guards stationed at the entrance and pushed down the lane toward the concert grounds. Soon they were joined by dozens and ultimately by hundreds of others, most of them bystanders who took no part in the fighting. Alarmed, Boyle ran down the lane in a vain attempt to call off this foray.

At first the violence consisted in intermittent stoning and fist-fighting. Then, as the darkness deepened, came the stabbing, by one of the Robeson ushers, of William Secor, a native of Mohegan and a veteran, though not a member of any veterans' organization.

The Westchester Grand Jury, which investigated the riots, said in its presentment: "This stabbing provided the spark which converted all of the people into an unruly crowd determined to prevent the concert from being staged."

This is putting it too mildly. All eyewitness accounts agree that after the stabbing

the violence was savage and terrifying though intermittent. On the other hand it is impossible to substantiate the innumerable atrocity stories that became current after the riot. Were women stripped and beaten? Were children tossed over wire fences? The Grand Jury was probably right in concluding that these and similar stories were inventions or gross exaggerations circulated by the Communists and their sympathizers. Nevertheless, the truth was brutal enough. It was a nasty affair, as most riots are.

What about the police? Did they blunder at the first riot? In the opinion of the writers, the answer is yes, and quite needlessly. The police had plenty of warning that trouble was likely. Yet only six deputies were present during the parade and afterward. And it was not until 8:30, when the stabbing occurred, that the call for help was phoned to the State Troopers who were being held in reserve at the Putnam Barracks nearby. Because of the road block, which had developed hours before and of which the police were fully informed, there was a delay in phoning as well as a delay in the arrival of the troopers. When they finally got there, the rioting stopped almost immediately.

Yet in the face of these facts the Grand Jury presentment says: "In the light of their experience [with previous Robeson concerts in the area] the precautions taken by these police officers met with the standards of good police procedure."

It is significant, and a rather healthy sign, that most of the responsible community leaders in the Peekskill area disagree with the Grand Jury on this point. They are convinced, as are the writers, that just a few more policemen would probably have been enough to prevent the first Robeson riot. On the other hand it is impossible to give credence to the allegation of the Communists that police protection was *deliberately* withheld. There is absolutely no evidence for this accusation.

IV

LESS than twenty-four hours after the first riot the Robesonites assembled 1,600 of their followers on a nearby Katonah estate and announced that they would make another attempt to hold the concert that the veterans had prevented. Four days later, on Thursday, they succeeded in renting for the

concert, to be held on the following Sunday, an abandoned golf course, again on Oregon Road, only a mile away from the scene of the first conflict.

The next morning the veterans, despite the urgent entreaties of District Attorney George M. Fanelli, voted to exercise their legal right to hold another protest parade on the highway in front of the concert ground.

It was touch-and-go for a while at the veterans' meeting. The district commander of the American Legion had publicly expressed his disapproval of a second demonstration, pointing out that "it is not the duty of American Legionnaires to appoint themselves vigilantes." The national organization of the Jewish War Veterans had endorsed either "quarantining" the Robeson demonstrators, or conducting the veterans' protest parade at a safe distance. But just when these arguments seemed about to win the day somebody demanded: "Have the Robesonites been asked to call off *their* show?" They hadn't, nor is it likely that they would have acceded if they had been asked. At the next showing of hands the die was cast for another demonstration.

The veterans, in voting for another demonstration, wanted to save face. They felt that if Robeson held his second meeting unopposed, they would appear in the public eye as cowards and braggarts, intimidated by Communist threats of "getting even." But it does not seem that, as a body, they wanted or planned another riot—and another scolding by their national organizations and a large section of the national press. At one of their meetings, before it was known that Robeson was returning for a second rally, the veterans considered protesting both against the Communists and against the violence that had occurred following their first parade, but the idea was buried under the excitement generated by news of the approaching second "concert." When one veteran spoke up and said: "If they [the Communists] attack us, let's really do a job on them," speaker after speaker rose and said in effect: "If you are bringing your organization down for that purpose, please stay away."

It is also probably true, on the other hand, that there were veterans and others who, while disclaiming violent intentions, were not exactly displeased at the prospect of battling it out with the Communists.

As for the Communist-controlled Civil Rights Congress which again sponsored Robeson, its avowed interest in the defense of free speech and assembly was, one may be sure, wholly hypocritical. Those familiar with the Communist program have long recognized that it requires the exploitation of the civil rights issue only with the objective of polarizing extremist passions and sowing the seeds of discord—the more violent the better—that will disrupt the democratic process. What the Communists wanted was another propaganda harvest which would be all the greater if a second veterans' demonstration led to another round of violence and another flare-up of racism. That the party's strategists had this in mind is clearly suggested by the bellicose tub-thumping and breast-beating of Robeson, Davis, and other Communist leaders, and by the all-out mendacity of the Communist and crypto-Communist press during the week between the riots. Both were well calculated to fan the combativeness of the veterans and their friends.

Howard Fast, for instance, after describing how twenty Robesonites held 1,000 natives at bay, commented: "The thousand New Americans for all their big talk were not very brave hand-to-hand in the dark."

What most angered the people of the Peekskill area, however, were the Communist lies about Secor.

On August 29, the *Daily Worker* reported: "Kramer [one of the Robesonites] said the man who was stabbed was knifed by mobsters. Our people came to hear a concert. It is nonsense that they carried weapons. In the dark, during the attack, I saw plenty of mobsters hit their own people with rocks and clubs. The man who was stabbed was certainly stabbed by them." On September 1, in a speech at the Golden Gate ballroom in Harlem, Howard Fast said: "I further charge they stabbed their own in a plot to accuse us of murder."

Unfortunately for this thesis, implausible on the face of it, some remarkable flashlight pictures of the melee that preceded the stabbing show a knife in the hand of a Robeson usher who was standing about fifteen feet from Howard Fast. (A Robeson usher is charged with the stabbing of Secor in one of the two indictments brought in by the Grand Jury.)

At a Harlem meeting on August 30, Robe-

son declared that he would sing again in Peekskill protected by 3000 of his own "security guards." "This marks the turning point!" shouted Robeson. "From now on we take the offensive." Another Communist leader, Benjamin Davis, said at the same meeting: "We warn all the flunkies of Wall Street, whether they wear white sheets or black robes like Judge Medina, that we are peace-loving people. But we are not pacifists and we are going to stand up toe to toe and slug it out."

Statements such as these were read in Peekskill, and the community's temper, already at a high pitch, mounted higher. It was evident to anyone living in the town that it would be a miracle if another Robeson meeting did not precipitate violence.

MEANWHILE, the Peekskill telephone company was forced to hire extra operators to deal with one of the most disturbing and least explained phenomena of the riots: a plague of anonymous and threatening phone calls. All of them were made from coin boxes. The calls—there were hundreds of them—started before the first riot and reached their apex during the week between the riots. Among the threatened were Chester Rick, at whose home the 1948 Robeson concert had been held, and Mrs. Mary Mobile, who criticized the American Legion post (which had protested a Robeson meeting) in a letter to the *Evening Star*. On the other side, Vincent Boyle and Leonard Rubinfeld, a Jewish war veteran and a member of District Attorney George M. Fanelli's staff, also received threatening anonymous calls. The calls seemed to be directed, in almost equal volume, against pro- and anti-Robesonites. The identities of the callers remain a mystery.

Racketeers poured into Peekskill after the first riot like dirty water from a broken drain. Among them were two frowzy professional anti-Semites who attempted to distribute their literature at the second riot but were quickly apprehended by veterans and spectators and chased out of town. There were also the flag salesmen. Practically every businessman in town felt compelled to buy an American flag—for \$14.

That was Peekskill on the eve of the second Robeson "concert." Two effigies of Paul Robeson were hanged Saturday night in Peekskill and removed by the police the fol-

lowing morning. "We all knew what was coming," recalls a well-known businessman. "The town was like an armed camp."

ACTUALLY, neither the veterans nor the townspeople of the area were armed; nor were they prepared for the disaster into which they were sliding with a kind of hypnotized helplessness. All told, only about 2,000 veterans marched in the second parade, as compared with a hoped-for 10,000. They had less than three days in which to mobilize their forces and on the day of the parade many of the groups that had planned to participate were turned back by the state troopers to prevent jamming of the roads.

In contrast, the Communist apparatus of organization and propaganda operated with speed and efficiency, beginning the day after the first riot. Every Communist cell and every front organization in the metropolitan area and in the Hudson Valley resort area was "activized." Meeting followed meeting. Press reports told of the recruiting of Robeson's promised 3,000 guards from the "goon" squads of Communist-dominated unions, and of the chartering of buses to transport a predicted 30,000 Communists and Communist sympathizers from New York and its suburbs to the rural Armageddon where avowed totalitarians would do battle for the Bill of Rights.

On the morning of the second concert, which was scheduled for 2:30 PM, both guards and "music lovers" arrived many hours ahead of time. The guards were all present by 9 AM.

By noon, when the 2,000 paraders began to assemble, a crowd of spectators numbering eventually about 5,000 lined the highway. They saw, in the hollow below them, an assemblage of 15,000 singing, cheering Robesonites, protected by a triple cordon of 2,500 "security guards." Led by a man in the uniform of an army lieutenant, the guards were stationed shoulder to shoulder in military formation. They were armed with baseball bats, tire irons, bottles on sticks, pepper, and old-fashioned can openers.

To deal with this situation, the county and state authorities had mobilized all their available forces, including even Westchester County Parkway police who had been detached from their duties as traffic control officers. In all, the police on the scene num-

bered 750, in addition to the 154 Peekskill and Putnam County officers assigned to street and highway patrol duties. The state police brought a radio-equipped trailer, radio police cars, walkie-talkies, loud speakers, and a helicopter especially chartered for the occasion. From a command post on the highway, District Attorney Fanelli assumed over-all direction of the police operations.

All accounts agree that, from early morning on, the atmosphere was one of fear and tension, mounting as the day advanced. This is confirmed by the tape recording made on the scene by Francis Lough of Station WLNA, which sounds like a scene out of a war documentary. You hear the mass singing of the Robesonites and the drums and fifes of the Legion bands trying vainly to drown them out. You hear the roar of the police helicopter overhead. You hear, as the crowd heard, the mechanically amplified voice of Howard Fast cutting through this uproar to shriek at the "un-American filth parading outside."

The importance of the loudspeaker as a factor in riot situations cannot be minimized. It swept the calculated insults of Fast's demagoguery into the faces of the Peekskill people outside the grounds and undoubtedly contributed to the subsequent violence of the spectators.

Again anti-Semitic and anti-Negro epithets were shouted by the crowd, but such incidents were noticeably fewer than during the first demonstration. The concert was conducted as planned, and without disorder. At its conclusion the police moved the crowds back and the automobiles of the concert-goers began coming out of the only exit from the grounds.

Then the stones began to fly. No one knows who started it. Twigs, pebbles, tomatoes, and soft drink bottles were thrown as well as stones. Once the stoning began, it spread like a chain reaction through the crowd. Before it had exhausted itself, hundreds of cars had their windows or windshield wipers broken, and three were overturned. Over 150 people were reported injured, three seriously. Cars were stoned as far south as Yonkers, twenty miles away. It was a horrifying spectacle of mob violence at its ugliest.

It has been charged, and there is some evidence, that the police, especially the West-

chester County officers, fraternized with the rioters and condoned their violence. Unquestionably, the police were hostile to the Communists, and were further angered by the appearance on the scene of Robeson's private police in the shape of the "security guards." It should be recognized, though, that from the police point of view, the situation was next to impossible. The bulk of their forces were tied down by the imperative necessity of preventing contact, with a resulting bloody battle, between the Robeson guards and the crowds outside the grounds. And after the stoning started, the traffic had to be kept moving, else the stalled cars would have been sitting ducks for the bombardment of the stoners. It was therefore impossible either to detail enough officers to patrol the roads effectively and prevent the stoning, or to take time out to arrest any substantial number of its perpetrators.

After the stonings, many of the drivers of the chartered buses deserted and about 700 of the Robeson guards were left stranded late that night on the concert grounds. According to the police, trouble started when a departing carload of guards was stopped and one of the guards swung a baseball bat at one of the troopers. After that, all outgoing cars were searched and over two hundred baseball bats along with fifty other weapons were found and confiscated. In some cases the police used their nightsticks to smash car windows and "take a poke" at "obstreperous" guards; none of the latter was seriously injured.

The guards were, at their own request, transported under police escort from the concert grounds to the Mohegan Colony where they spent several hours. The writers interviewed the president of the Colony, who witnessed their arrival. He declares that none of them showed any signs of having been hurt, that they were marched in military formation, and that they even cleaned up the grounds before they returned to New York early the following morning.

V

THE backwash of excitement and lawlessness from the riots continued for several days. A number of attempts were made to burn the house of Stephen D. Szego, who had rented the abandoned Hollow Brook golf course to the Robesonites for their second

concert. No great damage was done and the arsonists were never identified.

The Communist-Jew identification became common parlance during the period of the riots. "It was amazing after the first riot," said a liberal official, "to hear some people say that all Jews and Negroes were Communists. But by the day of the second concert, even high school and college graduates were convinced of this."

Many very nasty incidents occurred. A teen-age boy, rebuked for pawing over the newspapers in a stationery store in an effort to find a picture of himself in the crowds that lined the highway, returned at night with ten buddies, aged fourteen to sixteen, and invited the Jewish storekeeper to step outside; a citizen intervened and summoned a police officer. In another incident, as some summer residents were leaving after Labor Day, hoodlums stopped the cars, asked whether the occupants were Negroes, Jews, or Communists, and made vague threats.

A more serious unpleasantness involved a Jewish businessman, owner for thirty years of an attractive Peekskill store. After the first riot, it was rumored that this man had loaned Robeson his car, had sheltered Robeson in his home, had sold tickets for the concert, had sold food to the concertgoers. None of these charges was true. But the businessman's car was destroyed and when he left town—to take a vacation in the Adirondacks—the myth-makers decided they had been right; the fellow was a Communist and had fled Peekskill never to return. In great distress, the man's son placed an advertisement in the *Star* offering a \$100 reward to anyone who would identify the slanderers of his father. Subsequently the Chamber of Commerce devoted a session to rumors, by way of stopping this kind of thing.

The Jews responded to this tidal wave of suspicion in various ways. Some summer colonies employed guards. Young people collected stones. Meetings were held in Peekskill, Putnam, and Croton. Cool heads advised doing nothing, on the theory that the excitement would blow over. Others advocated a "We're against Communists, too" policy. Some argued that a stand against Communism and for civil liberties should be taken. The national Jewish organizations were called upon for help.

Business boycotts became the weapons of contending factions in Peekskill. Anti-Communists asked local advertisers to discontinue their advertisements in the *Peekskill Shopper*, a weekly owned by a Jewish veteran, which had said editorially that freedom of speech should have been permitted at the first concert. To counter this, pro-Robesonite summer residents threatened a shoppers' boycott unless storekeepers discontinued their advertisements in the *Evening Star*.

A move to ban Howard Fast's books from the Peekskill library was prevented by an alert liberal on the library board.

But these manifestations soon subsided and it was evident that what the area wanted most after the riots was peace. When the veterans, and especially Vincent Boyle, pressed for an Americanism Day parade on October 2, the community, fed up with demonstrations, gritted its teeth and squelched the idea.

VI

RIOTS are so compounded of failure, folly, and evil that they seldom have good fruits. Their only usefulness is to illuminate what should have been done in a particular locality years or months earlier, and to throw light on what other communities can do to prevent similar disasters.

In retrospect it is, of course, easy enough to see what could have happened as against what actually happened. The "quarantine method," later successfully applied to Robeson's appearances in Chicago and Washington, D. C., might have been used in Cortlandt. According to this method, the *Evening Star* and Station WLNA would have given no publicity to this concert that was not paid for by the Robesonites. A maximum of 2,000 Communists, sympathizers, and innocent participants would have assembled in an open field after dark, with the aid of a few traffic officers, and then gone home.

If anti-Communist feeling in the area was so great that this much self-control was not possible, the anti-Communist demonstration should have been held elsewhere than at the site of the concert, preferably at a different time, and should perhaps have taken another form—a meeting in the Peekskill baseball stadium or Depew Park, for instance. And, in any case, the police should have been given to understand that it was

their job to preserve order and prevent the violation of anyone's civil liberties—not to conduct a private war against Communism on their own.

Hindsight suggests a more radical solution with respect to the second riot. In the opinion of the writers, once the first riot had taken place, no further confrontation of the two aroused and hostile groups should have been permitted. Both the Robeson concert and the veterans' parade should have been canceled, either by stretching the emergency powers of county or state authorities or, if necessary, by the invocation of martial law. Abstractly, this could be interpreted as presenting the veterans with a victory. But the alternative was a new, vicious, and bloody riot that could have been prevented only by a mobilization of the National Guard. As so often happens, the real choice was between different evils rather than between good and evil. Failure to take proper action at the first riot could only be made up for by more drastic action before the second.

VII

IN ADDITION to the newspaper reports, there are now three major accounts of the riots: Howard Fast's "Eye-Witness: Peekskill," a Communist treatment; the American Civil Liberties Union pamphlet, "Violence in Peekskill," running to fifty pages and published in January 1950; and the 27-page presentment of the Grand Jury of Westchester County, issued on June 16, 1950, an official treatment. There are, in addition, televised movies taken at the second riot, sound recordings, and a great gallery of newspaper photographs. These latter materials have probably influenced the public mind more than has the printed word.

Unfortunately, none of the three major sources on the riots is entirely satisfactory.

The Communist reports of the riots are interesting only to the degree that they reveal the Communist objectives and strategies in the whole affair. They are, of course, wholly unreliable as factual sources.

"Violence in Peekskill," the report issued by the American Civil Liberties Union, is an impassioned indictment of the Peekskill community, its press, the veterans, and the police. In contrast, the Communists are flatly acquitted of any responsibility for either riot. Throughout the document, the authors

maintain the thesis that what was involved was the right to hold "a peaceful concert." Accompanying such naivety, there is a rather cavalier, and partial, handling of facts. The Grand Jury presentment justly said: "Much of its text and some of its conclusions are so far from the truth as to be scandalous." The presentment might well have specified such an example of inaccuracy as the allegation appearing on page 41 about veterans who were observed loading rocks into their car on the morning of the second riot. Because the report dramatically gave the car license, it was possible for the Grand Jury to check this. It found that the car was owned by a Jewish war veteran, a resident of Shrub Oak, who testified that he was building a dry well and that neither he nor his car had gone near the scene of the riots.

With the possible exception of a few statements made by persons whose names are given, the writers of this article would not regard any of the allegations made in the American Civil Liberties Union report as worthy of credence without careful checking. As social science, which it perhaps does not purport to be, the report is even less satisfactory. Peekskill is an ordinary American community which has undergone rather extraordinary social strains—concerning which the authors of the American Civil Liberties Union report exhibit neither interest nor understanding. Instead, in their eagerness to expose and denounce, they represent the people of the area to be something very close to the caricature drawn of them by the Communists, who called them fascists, Nazis, storm troopers, and mobsters.

By comparison, the Grand Jury's own presentment on the riots, based on an extended inquiry during which it examined 247 witnesses, is temperate and fair in its review of the facts, intelligent and liberal in its recommendations.

After condemning unqualifiedly the "un-American, unwarranted, and lawless acts of violence" that occurred during the riots, the Grand Jury goes on to urge, among other things, that patriotic and loyal Americans avoid being drawn into Communist traps set for the purpose of inviting situations that might encourage violence; that local officers be empowered to exercise "the widest discretion in preventing the development of

conditions that might result in the outbreak of violence"; that education concerning the true nature and purpose of Communism be undertaken in every community; and that legislative bodies should continue to consider appropriate laws to deal with the Communist problem.

However, the Grand Jury presentment is flawed badly by its failure—presumably on political grounds—to subject the police and other public authorities to the same rigorous criticism that it applies to the veterans and the Robesonites. The presentment is also inadequate in that its judgments—because of the legal restrictions applying to testimony given before grand juries—are not supported by the voluminous evidence on which they are known to be based. It is nonetheless true, as the *New York Times* said editorially, that "It [the presentment] is not a whitewash in any sense; it is a serious appraisal of a serious problem."

WHAT the ACLU report obscured and what the Grand Jury saw with entire clarity is that the Communists unveiled at Peekskill a strategical formula by which they hope to increase civil strife, to inflame the racial and religious passions and antagonisms that are already this country's shame, and in fact to play the same role in weakening this country before a foreign enemy that Nazi agents and their domestic supporters played during World War II. (What would Russia not give for news of a race riot with which to flood the air over Korea, the Near East, Indonesia, Latin America?) That the Communists pose as the chief defenders of Jewish and Negro rights forms only a deceptive distinction between them and the Nazi agents. The slogans of anti-anti-Negroism, despite the sincerity with which individual Communists may still utter them, have simply become their most effective weapons in attacking the American government and people and in weakening this country before the Soviet attack—just as anti-Semitism became the chief weapons of the Nazi propaganda offensive.

This creates enormous dangers for those who are honestly engaged in fighting anti-Semitism and anti-Negroism, and are not merely using these causes to advance the interests of a foreign power. Negro leaders like A. Philip Randolph promptly repudi-

ated the Communist party's efforts to make the Peekskill riots appear as part of the major Negro struggle for emancipation. Similar repudiations have been made by the *Jewish Daily Forward* and by Jewish religious leaders and organizations. But as yet the Jewish community seems only vaguely aware of the full potential viciousness of the formula.

Like prayer beads on a string, the party reiterates the words: Jew, Negro, Communist—again and again until in the public's mind they become fused in an indissoluble amalgam—or so it is hoped.

On August 29, 1949, the *Daily Worker* asked editorially:

"What was the target of the Peekskill violence? The 14,000,000 members of the Negro community of the United States. But in warning the Negro people that they must submit to the planned World War III or face lynchings at home, the pro-war mob is following the pattern used by the Germans in preparing Germany for war. That pattern is to silence the nation as a whole by first assailing the Jews, the Negro people, and the Communists."

The true dimensions of the problem of Negro and Jewish rights is thus completely confused in a blaze of outrageous lies: as if realities were not difficult enough, the fighters for Negro and Jewish rights must now deal with Communist phantoms.

Paul Robeson and William L. Patterson, secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, apparently look forward with mingled dread and elation to the blood bath they predict for their people if they resist war against the USSR or her satellites. Said William L. Patterson: "The Czarist Black Hand [sic] could not have done a better job than was done in Peekskill. The Negro was to be cast in the role that the Jew played in Germany. The FBI fears that a Negro leader can be a greater threat to this country's drive against civil rights than a white leader. Negroes, quite out of proportion to their numbers, can play a role in throwing back reaction. They owe this to billions of people in the Far East, who want some force to emerge capable of challenging American reaction. The Negro is singularly blessed, because he is now prepared to play a significant role in world history."

Mr. Patterson seems to grudge the Jews

their share in this destined martyrdom: "I disagree with the findings of the ACLU report that the violence was chiefly fostered by anti-Semitism," he said. "The pogrom was more against Negroes than against Jews." But the Jews will be allowed their role. After the second riot, Robeson told New York reporters: "We Negroes owe a great debt to the Jewish people, who stood by the hundreds to defend me and all of us yesterday."

A new American myth is thus being established in which Negroes, Jews, and Communists are arrayed against the rest of the country.

The myth will develop, of course, only if we are foolish enough to let it; only if we allow Jews and Negroes falsely to become identified in the public mind with Communists; if we allow Communist propaganda to convince Jews and Negroes that only the Communists have the interests of these groups at heart.

IF ONE considers the relations of Christians and Jews in Peekskill before the riots, these two facts appear: first, that the relations between the year-round Christian and Jewish residents of Peekskill were relatively good; second, that relations between the Jewish summer residents and the Christians were practically non-existent. The curtain that separated them wasn't iron, but it let in very little light. Sociologically viewed, what the area was suffering from at the time of the riots was a severe and chronic case of country-city animosity, which neither the country nor the city people had ever tried to relieve. This lack of relations between old-timers and newcomers was the weakest link in the entire fabric of the area's social life. If, for some years before the riots, there had been as much mutual respect as obtains today between the permanent Christian residents of the area and the summer residents of the area's oldest Jewish colony, in Mohegan, the myth that all Jews are Communists could never have been taken seriously.

The Mohegan Colony Association is the oldest Jewish colony in the area. Some of its residents have lived there for a quarter of a century and are accepted as friends and natives by the country people of Cortlandt. Yet, since 1927 and continuing to today,

there has been much gossip in the area about the "Communists" in Mohegan. Oliver Pilat, who wrote a series of stories on the area for the *New York Post* after the riots, said: "Mohegan Colony, originally 100 per cent Communist, is now said by political sophisticates to be 55 per cent anti-Communist." Mr. Pilat later apologized for this gross exaggeration of Communist influence, but he did not state the true facts about the Colony and its Communist members, which are these: that no one suspected of being a Communist has been admitted to the Colony since 1927; that Communists nevertheless managed to become Colony members by buying real estate from non-Communist members; that the Colony has had to take sharp measures against its crypto-Communists on several occasions; that the Communist vote on purely Colony issues has never, in the recollection of one of the oldest and most active members, exceeded 15 per cent of the membership.

These facts about Mohegan Colony were simply unknown to the natives of Peekskill—especially to those who glibly made the Communist-Jew identification. The Peekskill area does not to this day know how small the Communist contingent in the Colony is, nor how troublesome it has been to the other members of the Colony. It does know, however, that 100 members of the Colony, three days after the first riot, wrote an open letter to the *Evening Star*, saying that rioting and mob violence were repugnant to them, but that "they also objected strenuously to being used by peoples or groups whose totalitarian ideas we unqualifiedly condemn." Last Fourth of July, the fire company of the village of Mohegan, which is mainly Christian, gave half the proceeds of its annual bazaar to the United Jewish Appeal.

ONE other thing, at least, was made overwhelmingly clear by the riots and their sequels, namely, that liberals and their organizations have as yet no adequate answer to the problem created by the machinations of a group implacably devoted to the destruction of all liberty.

The approach of the American Civil Liberties Union appears to the writers to be fragmentary and negative. At no point does its report recognize the desirability of edu-

cating the public—or its own members—concerning the categorical difference between the conspiratorial anti-democratic Communist party and its fronts, and genuinely democratic political and social groups. After urging that no restrictive laws, regulations, or permit systems be established, the report asserts: "Places for meetings may be designated in the public interest, but in such cases *no distinctions whatever should be made of political views.*"

The italics are the writers'. In our opinion this recommendation was dated and inept when it was written. While the United States is grappling with quite new problems, the American Civil Liberties Union, judged by its annual reports and its handling of Peekskill, is mechanically and breathlessly answering the same old fire gong, without bothering to inquire into the nature of the new flare-ups, and without taking time to see if its equipment is effectively up to date. Such enthusiasm has been very serviceable in the past, but the world is a little less simple now.

In contrast, Cortlandt, the scene of two riots, has tried to grapple realistically with the problem of future Communist gatherings. In a series of town meetings, it passed three ordinances. The final one, which supersedes the others, was drafted by Louis Waldman, well-known labor lawyer and Croton summer resident. It guarantees freedom of speech and assembly "for lawful purposes," but imposes penalties of \$100 fines and thirty-day jail sentences for participating in a meeting "held for the purpose of breaking down law enforcement or disturbing the public peace, and carried out in a manner tending to the breakdown of law enforcement or the disturbance of public peace."

At the American Civil Liberties Union's panel discussion on "Communism and the Bill of Rights," held at the Waldorf-Astoria on February 22 of this year, Mr. Waldman defended the final Cortlandt ordinance against attacks by Arthur Garfield Hays, Osmond K. Fraenkel, Professor Thomas Emerson of the Yale Law School, and Terence McCarthy, principal investigator of the Robeson riots. According to the American Civil Liberties Union's published summary of this discussion, Mr. Waldman contended that "the Bill of Rights does not advocate

destruction of a government that protects the rights of citizens; neither does it guarantee protection of fifth columnists or of citizens who commit perjury or treason." The objective of the Communists, he said, is the destruction of free government and the Bill of Rights. He felt that the American Civil Liberties Union should support the government's fight against "the conspiracy of Communism," just as it would fight to protect the Bill of Rights if it were threatened from another quarter.

"What is to be done," asked Waldman, "with organizations that have a vested interest in disorder, as had the Nazis in Germany, the Fascists in Italy—as have the Stalinists everywhere?"

To this question it is not enough, it seems to us, to reply, as did Osmond K. Fraenkel in the course of the same panel discussion: "It is not the function of the ACLU to support the government in its prosecution of Communists." It is also not the function of the ACLU to assist the Communists in their planned and programmed exacerbation and exploitation of racial and religious prejudice. Yet this was the objective effect, however inadvertent, of the American Civil Liberties Union's report on the Robeson riot.

Nor is it of help to perpetuate the semantic confusions that the Communists do their best to foster. For example, consider the illogic and the dangerous verbal amalgam

contained in the following sentence, which appears both in "Violence in Peekskill" and in the American Civil Liberties Union's weak and evasive reply to the Grand Jury's criticism of that document:

"The outbreak thus embodies the combined expressions of the most explosive prejudices in American life—against Communists, Negroes, and Jews."

But anti-Communism is *not* just a prejudice: it is a necessary defense reaction. Is it prejudice to identify the Communist fifth column that shook its fist at Peekskill with the totalitarian regime that is today waging an undeclared war against this country? Is it prejudice that has led the free peoples to fight under the flag of the United Nations in defense of their common liberties against totalitarian aggression?

That this defense must be conducted is a matter both of principle and of self-preservation. *How* it is conducted on the home front is a matter of tactics. The Peekskill riots provide us with a shocking example of how *not* to deal with Communist fomentation of racial and religious tension and conflict. Their sequels also provide us with a dismaying example of the intellectual confusion and tactical ineptitude of many of our professional liberals. Whether we have learned enough, soon enough, from these experiences will be demonstrated during the weeks and months immediately ahead.